International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods (IJARESM),
ISSN: 2455-6211, Volume 13, Issue 5, May-2025, Available online at: www.ijaresm.com

Attitudinal Changes of Secondary School Students: A Comparative Analysis Between Pre-Covid and Post Covid Period

Namitha Farzana Sajith

Scholar, Department of English, Kerala University, India

---***************--

ABSTRACT

The study in the "Attitudinal Changes of Secondary School Students: A Comparative Analysis between Pre-COVID and Post-COVID Periods" examines the changes in the attitude and behavioural patterns of secondary school students of Kollam and Trivandrum districts in Kerala as part of the COVID pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to the educational landscape profoundly impacting the social, emotional, behavioural, and learning dimensions of secondary school students. Understanding these shifts is critical for educators, policy-makers, and mental health professionals to effectively address the challenges students face and foster their overall development. The study was conducted based on four criteria, namely, changes in the social behaviour, emotional behaviour, personal behaviour, and learning styles of secondary school students. Interviews were conducted among 30 school counsellors and a questionnaire was provided to 50 secondary school teachers of Kollam and Trivandrum districts in Keralato collect data on students' social, emotional, and personal behavioural changes. The study used interview as the technique and interview schedule and questionnaire as the tools, where the data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus, the present study is very significant as it highlights the differences between pre-COVID and post-COVID dynamics, providing valuable insights into the evolving needs of secondary students. By examining these changes, this study can inform strategies to enhance student well-being support emotional resilience and tailor learning approaches.

Keywords: Attitudinal Change, Secondary School Students, Pre-COVID and Post-COVID Periods.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school years are a critical phase of development marked by significant changes in students' social, emotional, behavioural, and learning dynamics. Before COVID-19 pandemic, students typically navigated these changes within structured school environments, enriched by direct social interactions and hands-on academic experiences. Post-pandemic, however, the landscape of education and students' well-being has shifted dramatically, driven by prolonged isolation, virtual learning and a readdressed academic culture.

In pre-COVID scenario, secondary school students primarily experienced in-person schooling, which provided opportunities for peer bonding, extracurricular participation, and face-to-face communication. Emotional resilience and behavioural norms were largely shaped by the immediate school community and family environment. Learning style predominantly revolved around traditional classroom settings with direct teacher guidance, fostering active collaboration and engagement. Although challenges such as bullying, academic pressure, and mental health concerns existed, the support systems were more accessible through on-campus counselling and peer networks.

The pandemic disrupted this familiar structure introducing new challenges and reshaping students' dynamics. Socially, students faced limited interaction with peers, leading to feeling of isolation and weakened interpersonal skills. Emotionally, the uncertainty of the pandemic heightened anxiety, depression, and a sense of instability. Behavioural changes including increased resilient on technology and reduced physical activity, have become evident. Learning styles shifted dramatically as students adapted to online education, requiring greater self-discipline and independence while exposing disparities in access to resources.

These pre-pandemic and post-pandemic changes underscore the need for adaptable education strategies and robust mental health support to address the evolving needs of secondary students. Rebuilding a balanced environment is essential to help them thrive socially, emotionally, behaviourally and academically in a post-pandemic world.

In this scenario, the investigator with the present project intends to make a comparative analysis of attitudinal changes of secondary school students during pre-COVID and post-COVID periods.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The occurrence of the global pandemic has proven human beings' ability to urb any situation and thrive forward. However, there has been significant and widespread changes in the attitude of secondary school stunts in all the levels of cognitive an affective domain, such as personal and social behaviour, motional behaviour, and learning styles.

Lahak Bhatta and Nita A. Reji investigated the behavioural changes that happened within the students after COVID in 2023. Their findings about the personal and social behaviour of students are reflected in the following points. The pandemic has significantly impacted students' social interaction. Th physical shift from classroom learning to four walls of home learning has visibly hang how stunts behave in school. Post-OVI schools await stunts to om back to normalcy, but there were many hidden challenges. Factors affecting personal and social behaviour includes loneliness, isolation, social distancing measures, lockdown, and lack of social interactions. Since the start of the outbreak, there has been increased cases of suicidal attempts among students, which appears to be associated with limited social contact and feelings of loneliness.

G.D. Boca in her research article "Factors Influencing Students' Behaviour and Attitude during COVID-19" in 2021 establishes key changes and factors that affected emotional well-being as well as learning style. The pandemic has significantly increased mental health problems among students, including emotional stability, anxiety, depression, stress, etc. Among those who were significantly impacted during COVID-19 outbreak was secondary school students, who had to face great adjustments with regard to learning. This has led to development or enhancement of emotional difficulties and a decrease in their overall wellbeing. Some major factors affecting the emotional behaviour of students include, closure and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, self-isolation, limited social interaction, peer experiences, loss of daily routine and boredom, uncertainty of future, economic concerns, family stress, lack of physical activity, etc.
In 2024, Zaki Kurniawan and Rizka conducted a study entitled, "Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Learning Styles". According to the study, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, this study provides a platform for creating flexible strategies that align with the dynamic shifts in students' learning styles, promising a more adaptable and responsive educational system in the future.

In 2024, Elisa Opperman conducted a study entitled, "Children's Social Emotional Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic". The study examined the development of children's social-emotional problems during COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the role of children's home and pre-school learning environments. Results showed an increase in emotional problems, which was more pronounced among already disadvantaged groups of children from families with lower income and lower educational background.

In 2023, Riya, a scholar of Amity Institute of Education conducted "A Study of Behaviour of Students in Post-COVID Period". The study found out that students have become restless and inattentive after COVID. Also, the behaviour of students towards teachers have changed. The responders even conveyed that the behaviour of students towards their peers changed, their impatience grew, they were losing their temper frequently.

In 2021 Anamika Sharma conducted a study entitled, "Evaluating Pre and Post COVID-19 Learning". According to the study, students have significantly higher perception of the pre-pandemic learning which indicated that they have more affirmative opinions about blended e-learning. However, they did not have a similar perception towards post-pandemic learning.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the attitudinal changes of secondary school students during the pre-COVID period with respect to:
a. Social and personal behaviour
b. Emotional behaviour
c. Learning style

2. To study the attitudinal changes of secondary school students during the post-COVID period with respect to:
a. Social and personal behaviour
b. Emotional behaviour
c. Learning style

3. To compare the attitudinal changes of secondary school students between pre-COVID and post-COVID period.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is limited social interaction among secondary school students during post COVID leading to personal behavioural changes like loneliness, isolation, etc.

2. There are severe emotional imbalances like stress, anxiety, and depression during post-COVID compared to pre-COVID.

3. There is a negative influence of technology on the learning styles of secondary school students during post-COVID compared to pre-COVID.

METHODOLOGY

The present study has adopted interview and survey method, and the tools used are interview schedule and choice-based questionnaire.

Population: The population of the study is the counsellors and secondary school teachers in the state of Kerala.

Sample: The sample taken for the study is 30 counsellors and 50 secondary school teachers from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts in Kerala.

Tools and Techniques: The present study used interview as the technique and interview schedule and questionnaire as the tools.

Measures Adopted for Analysis
In the present study, for the questionnaire, calculation of percentage was used for analysing the data. The interview schedule collected qualitative data and hence, content analysis was used for analysing the collected data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Analysis Of Changes In Social And Personal Behaviour Among Secondary School Students During The Pre-Covid And Post-Covid Periods.

According to all the counsellors, the role of teachers diminished during post-COVID compared to pre-COVID. The efforts of teachers remained unnoticed and unappreciated, and a boundary has been set for teachers to indulge in the lives of students. The methods and strategies used by teachers during pre-COVID have become futile post-COVID with the technological explosion during the COVID period. The affection and bond that existed between students and teachers has vanished to a large extent during post-COVID. The role of a teacher as a guide, supporter, and motivator has faced a drastic change during post-COVID period.

Generally, adolescents find reliability and comfort mostly with their peer groups. They are highly influenced by the advice and decisions put forward by their peers that shape their behavioural patterns. According to counsellors (20%) working in the schools of rural areas, the relationship between peers has not been much affected by the interference of technology or digital tools. However, in the post-COVID period, the depth of their relationship has observed changes.All the counsellors unanimously stated that the most prominent transformation observed in students is their reliance on online strangers, who are their 'new friends.' Instagram is this highly polled social media, where students make up their new friends. Students share all their personal feelings, emotions, and family circumstances with these strangers, who comfort and console them, creating an emotional bond with the students.

The lack of parental involvement can be a cause of the new trend of online friends, according to the counsellors. When parents are unavailable for their children to share their feelings, they tend to give ears to those who listen to them.

Another significant change observed by majority of the counsellors (70%) is that parents are highly under the influence of their children. They believe their children blindly and accuse teachers of charging false accusations on their wards. A majority of students convince their parents, and hence, parents justify their children's misbehaviours and unconventional attitudes.

A majority of counsellors (80%) have also dealt with cases, where students have exhibited loneliness and isolation due to a lack of social interactions during COVID. Their communication style, behavioural patterns, etc., had undergone significant changes, bringing personal behavioural changes in them. In some cases, students have also exhibited

suicidal tendencies due to uncontrollable isolation and loneliness. The case is especially relevant for single children, as their only source of social interactions was school, playtime, etc.

Another factor that contributed to the suicidal tendencies in secondary school students, according to the counsellors is the love affair and the breakups. Post-COVID, students are physically more attached to their partner than mentally. As a result, breakups and sudden avoidance by the partners damage them emotionally, bringing suicidal tendencies.

Analysis Of Emotional Changes In Secondary School Students During Pre-Covid And Post-Covid Periods.

In rural areas, some of the counsellors (20%) opined that students are accustomed to stress and tensionas they live a poverty-stricken life. Therefore, emotional issues due to financial instability during COVID were not much affected by them.Even in urban areas, according to 80% counsellors, students are not much disturbed emotionally due to the financial instability, as parents always make sure that their children get whatever they need. Most of the parents never openly discussed their economic situation with the children; instead, they provided them with all they needed.

A majority of the counsellors pointed out that substance abuse is one of the most relevant issues identified during post-COVID. Counselling is given to such students at primary levels at schools, and a few cases are referred to governmental agencies for advanced treatments and solutions. However, the success rate of counselling is negligible as families will not indulge in follow-up sessions provided by the counsellors.

A minority of counsellors (10%) opined that with a decline in physical activities during COVID, students are observed with major emotional issues during post-COVID period. Though students are still interested in sports and games, a minority of students find more interest in digital gadgets, leading to emotional imbalances.

The counsellors unanimously stated that the interference of technology and the use of digital gadgets by students have affected their rationality and thinking to a large extent. Pre-COVID students had access only to their parents' mobile phones, while the situation has undergone a drastic change post-COVID, where most of the students have their mobile phones, laptops, etc., which are inaccessible to parents and password protected.

Yet another issue associated with the digital surge, according to some counsellors (30%) is that students have become introverts. They do not share their feelings with parents, teachers, or friends. This has made them create their own secluded space, where none of the people surrounding them have entry.

Analysis Of Changes In Learning Style Based On Physical Learning And Digitalised Learning As Perceived By Teachers

80% of the teachers opined that hybrid teaching was most effective post-COVID, while 10% responded collaborative/project-based learning was effective. A negligible 5% of teachers opined that fully digitalised and conventional in-person teaching was successful. A majority (70%) of teachers responded that students' attention span and focus have seen the most change post-COVID, while 30% saw adaptability totechnology as a change post-COVID.

70% of counsellors have opined that the learning styles of students have undergone post-COVID changes. Students rely on digital tools (like AI) at a high rate, killing their creativity and capacities.
The most significant challenge observed in students transitioning back to in-person learning from online learning, according to 40% of teachers, is the increased dependency on digital tools. 30% of teachers felt students had difficulty in face-to-face social interactions, 25% of teachers opined students had reduced focus, while 5% of teachers responded that students struggle to adapt to structured schedules.

Analysis of Changes in Learning Style Based on Flexibility in Time, Location, and Variety in Material

The flexibility in time and location for learning has lessened the seriousness in studies, according to 65% of teachers. While 15% believe that it has enhanced learning in students. 75% of teachers responded that students have an over-addiction to social media post-COVID, while 15% opined there is a lack of emotional balance due to dependence on technology, and 10% believe that students have become self-centred.There is an increased preference for digital materials like e-notes according to 70% of teachers, while 25% of teachers opine that there is a balanced preference in students for both digital and traditional materials, while 5% mention that their preferences are unclear.

Analysis of Changes in Learning Style Based on Technological Interventions

45% of teachers opined that the use of technology like video conferencing, digital tools, etc., has increased the screen time of students. While 30% have a positive opinion, as it has brought diverse thoughts and perspectives to students.

15% of teachers responded that the use of technology made them exploratory learners, and 10% opined that it has led to a decrease in subject knowledge.

Analysis of Changes in Reading and Writing Habits

90% of teachers responded that the pandemic influenced students' reading habits by shifting their focus to reading shorter materials like blogs, social media articles, etc. While 10% think that there have been no significant changes in students' reading habits. Usage of short forms while writing has been observed by the majority (60%) of teachers, while 40% observed greater use of digital tools like AI tools for writing.
The opinion of teachers is in contrast with the counsellors as 70% of counsellors opined that only a minority of students have improved their online reading habits with the huge access to information at their fingertips.

Analysis of the Subject Competency of Students

60% of teachers used gamified learning and interactive tools to bridge the gap of subject competency in students. While 5% gave liberal assessments and 10% indulged in traditional lecture-based teaching to bridge the gap. 40% of teachers believe that to some extent they were able to rectify the gap, while 5% of teachers opined that they were scarcely able to rectify the gap of subject competency. 90% of the Counsellors mentioned that a significant percentage of students have lost their basement due to online class during COVID. As a result, they exhibit poor subject competency, finding it difficult for teachers to teach and keep up the standards.

DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that secondary school students have undergone huge behavioural changes in various aspects of life, including their social, emotional, and behavioural aspects. The study has also witnessed a transformation in their learning styles. “A Study of Behaviour of Students in Post-COVID Period” conducted by Riya, a scholar from Amity University in 2023 goes hand-in-hand with the present study, which identified that students have become restless and inattentive after COVID. The behaviour of students towards their teachers and peers have also observed significant changes as their impatience grew, losing their temper frequently.

In case of changes in learning style, a study conducted by Zaki Kurniawan and Rizka on the “Impact of COVID Pandemic on Student Learning Styles” in 2024 stands 18 against the findings of the present study. According to Zaki and Rizka, flexible strategies that align with the dynamic shifts in students’ learning styles, promising a more adaptable and responsive educational system in future. However, in the present study, according to counsellors, this flexibility has destructed students, learning habits and styles, positing prominent challenges in the future educational system.

The study about students increased emotional problems after COVID, conducted by Elisa Oppermann in 2024 goes hand-in-hand with the present study. However, Ellisa Oppermann’s findings that children from families with lower income and lower educational backgrounds suffer from emotional instabilities counter the findings of the present study.

The rate of depression and loneliness in students has been reported exponentially high according to the study conducted by Lisa Kiltz in 2023, which goes hand-in-hand with the present study.

FINDINGS

1) The role of teachers diminished during post-COVID compared to pre-COVID. As a result, in mostcases, teachers have failed in the behaviour modification of students post-COVID due to the imbalances in student-teacher relationships.
2) A most prominent transformation observed in students is their reliance on online strangers. Instagram is regarded as one of the most popular social media platforms where students can meet new people.
3) In rural areas, students were happy to transition back to the normal school days, whereas in urban areas students face adjustment issues due to online classes.
4) Students have exhibited loneliness and isolation during post-COVID period compared to pre-COVID days due to a lack of social interactions during COVID.
5) Students have also exhibited suicidal tendencies due to uncontrollable isolation and loneliness.
6) In both rural and urban areas, emotional issues due to financial instability have not affected students.
7) Substance abuse is identified as one of the most prominent issues during post-COVID, leading to emotional instabilities.
8) Interference of technology and the use of digital gadgets by students have affected their rationality and thinking to a large extent post- COVID.

9) Students began expressing their emotions more fiercely and violently inconsiderate about the surroundings and people.
10) Students began to rely on digital tools (like AI) at a high rate, affecting their creativity and capacities.
11) Students exhibit poor subject competency, finding it difficult for teachers to teach and keep up the standards.
12) A minority of students have improved their online reading habits with a huge access to information at their fingertips during post-COVID period.
13) Writing habits have declined drastically and the usage of short forms while writing has been observed in students during post-COVID.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a complex array of challenges which had mental repercussions for everyone, including students. Grief, fear, uncertainty, social isolation, increased screen time, and parental fatigue have negatively affected the mental health of children. Friendships and family support are strong stabilizing forces for students, but the pandemic has also disrupted them. Teaching and learning have seen revolutionary changes with digitalized experiences. Online learning platforms, gamified learning, etc. have contributed to new learning experiences for the students. This has made them proficient and advanced in learning out of the box. However, this positive aspect is negligible compared to the misuse of digitalization of education. Students have become addicted to digital gadgets causing both physical and mental issues. In conclusion, the lives of students during pre-COVID and post-COVID have taken a revolutionary turn that has both positive and negative impacts on their lives.

REFERENCES

[1]. Habók, A., & Nguyen, L. A. T. (2024). A comparative study of language learners’ ICT attitudes and behavior pre- and post-COVID-19. Scientific Reports, 14, Article 600.
[2]. Kurniawan, Z. (2024). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning styles: Naïve Bayes and decision tree classification in education, 13(1), 57–64.
[3]. Oppermann, E., Blaurock, S., Zander, L., & Anders, Y. (2024). Children's social emotional development during the COVID-19 pandemic: Protective effects of the quality of children's home and preschool learning environments. Early Education and Development, 35(7), 1432-1460.
[4]. Di Pietro, G. (2023). The impact of COVID-19 on student achievement: Evidence from a recent meta-analysis. Educational Research Review, 39.
[5]. Kiltz, L. (2023). Investigating how students’ learning environment, social and physical well-being influence their resilience and feelings of depression and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands. Higher Education Research & Development, 42(8), 1–16.
[6]. Riya. (2023). A study of behavior of students in post-COVID period. Amity International Journal of Teacher Education, 9(1), 1-7.
[7]. Zheng, Y., & Zheng, S. (2023). Exploring educational impacts among pre, during, and post-COVID-19 lockdowns from students with different personality traits. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 20, Article 21.
[8]. Popa, E. M. (2022). Prospective study on the attitude toward school of secondary school students in the post-pandemic period. Technium Social Sciences Journal, 31, 75–88.
[9]. Boca, G. D. (2021). Factors influencing students’ behavior and attitude towards online education during COVID-19, 13(13)
[10]. Jain S, Lall M, Singh A. (2021). Teachers’ voices on the impact of COVID-19 on school education: Are ed-tech companies really the panacea? Contemporary Education Dialogue. 18(1): 58-89.
[11]. Sharma, A. (2021). Evaluating pre- and post-COVID-19 learning: An empirical study of learners' perception in higher education. Education and Information Technologies, 26(6), 1-18.
[12]. Pokhrel, S., & Chhetri, R. (2021). A literature review on impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning. Higher education for the Future, 8(1).
[13]. Taneja Ashur and Dutt Ishwar. (2021) "COVID-19 and its implications on students’ learning behavior". Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal).
[14]. Vyjayanthi NV, Banerjee D, Rao TS. (2020). The Silent victims of the Pandemic: Children and adolescents during the COVID-19. Journal of Indian Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. 16(3): 17-31.